

A
S E R M O N

Preached at
WHITE-HALL
BEFORE THE
Q U E E N
ON THE
Monthly Fast-Day,

September 16th 1691.

By the Most Reverend Father in God,
J O H N Lord Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*,
Primate and Metropolitan of all *England* :
And One of Their Majesties most Honourable Privy-Council.

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ZECHARIAH VII. 5.

Speak unto all the People of the Land, and to the Priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, DID YE AT ALL FAST UNTO ME, EVEN UNTO ME?

IN the beginning of this Chapter the People of the *Jews*, who were then rebuilding the Temple at *Jerusalem*, and had already far advanced the work, though it was not perfectly finish'd till about two years after, send to the *Priests* and the *Prophets*, to enquire of them, whether they should still continue the *Fast* of the *fifth* month, which they had begun in *Babylon* and continued to observe during the seventy years of their Captivity, in a sad remembrance of the destruction of the City and Temple of *Jerusalem*; or should not now rather turn it into a Day of feasting and gladness?

To this enquiry God by his Prophet returns an answer in this, and the following Chapter. And first he expostulates with them concerning those their monthly Fasts, whether they did in-

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deed

deed deserve that name, and were not rather a mere shew and pretence of a Religious Fast, *vers. 4, 5.* Then came the word of the Lord of Hosts unto me, saying; Speak unto all the People of the Land, and to the Priests, saying; When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me? The enquiry was particularly concerning the Fast of the Fifth month, because the occasion of that was more considerable than of all the other; but the answer of God mentions the Fasts of the fifth and seventh month, these two being probably observ'd with greater solemnity than the other.

But for our clearer understanding of this, it will be requisite to consider the original and occasion of all their monthly Fasts: which as appears from other places of Scripture, in short was this: When the Jews were carried away Captive into Babylon, in a deep sense of this great Judgment of God upon them for their Sins, and of the heavy affliction which they lay under, they appointed four annual Fasts, which they observed during their seventy years Captivity; viz. the Fast of the fourth month, in remembrance of the Enemies breaking through the

the Wall of Jerusalem, which we find mention'd, Jer. 52. 6, 7. The Fast of the fifth month, in memory of the destruction of the City and Temple of Jerusalem, vers. 12, 13. The Fast of the seventh month, in remembrance of the slaying of Gedaliah, upon which followed the dispersion of the Jews, of which we have an account, Jer. 42. 1, 2. And the Fast of the tenth month, in memory of the beginning of the Siege of Jerusalem, of which we find mention, 2 Kings 25.

In this order we find these four annual Fasts mention'd Zechar. 8. 19. not according to the order of the Events, but of the Months of the several years in which these Events happened: And there likewise God gives a full answer to this enquiry concerning the continuance of these annual Fasts, namely, that they should for the future be turned into solemn Days of joy and gladness. And the word of the Lord of Hosts Zech. 8. 18, came unto me, saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the Fast of the fourth month, and the Fast of the fifth, and the Fast of the seventh, and the Fast of the tenth, shall be to the House of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerfull Feasts.

I return now to the Text, *Did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* that is, did these *Fasts* truly serve to any Religious end and purpose? Did not the People content themselves with a mere external shew and performance, without any inward affliction and humiliation of their Souls, in order to a real repentance? Did they not still go on in their sins; nay, and add to them upon these Occasions, fasting for strife and debate and oppression? In a word, were they not worse rather than better for them? And therefore God had no regard to them, as it follows in this Chapter; Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying; Execute judgment, and shew mercy and compassion every man to his brother; and oppress not the widows nor the fatherless, the stranger nor the poor; and let none of you imagine mischief against his brother in your heart: But they refused to hearken, and pull'd away the shoulder, and stopp'd their ears that they should not hear; yea, they made their heart as an Adamant stone, lest they should hear the Law and the words which the Lord of Hosts hath sent by his spirit in the former Prophets: Therefore came great wrath from the Lord of Hosts: Therefore it is come to pass, that as He cryed and they would not hear; so they cryed, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of Hosts.

Verf. 9, 10,
11, 12, 13.

So

So that notwithstanding these outward Solemnities of Fasting and Prayer, here was nothing of a Religious Fast; *did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* They were sensible of the Judgments of God which were broken in upon them, but they did not turn from their sins, but persisted still in their obstinacy and disobedience.

And what God here by the Prophet *Zechary* calls *fasting unto Him, even unto Him*, the Prophet *Isaiah* calls the Fast which God hath chosen, and an acceptable day to the Lord. *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a Fast as I have chosen, a Day for a man to afflict his Soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a Fast and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house; when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy self from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth*

forth as the morning, and thy salvation shall spring forth speedily: Then shalt thou call and the Lord shall answer, &c.

From all which passages we may easily understand wherein these *Monthly Fasts* of the Jews were defective, and what was the fault that God finds with them when he expostulates so severely in the Text: *When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh Month, even these seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* In the general the fault which God finds with them was this, that these Solemnities did not serve any real end and purpose of Religion, but fail'd in their main design, which was a sincere repentance and reformation of their lives: For which reason He tells them that they were not at all acceptable to Him, nor esteem'd by Him as perform'd unto Him, because they did not answer the true intention and design of them.

My work at this time shall be, *First*, to consider in general what it is to *fast* unto God, that is, to keep a truly Religious Fast. *Secondly*, to bring the matter nearer to our selves, I shall consider more particularly, what the Duty of this Day, appointed by their *Majesties* for a Solemn

lemn Humiliation and Repentance throughout the Nation, does require at our hands.

I. I shall consider in general what it is to fast unto God, that is, to keep a truly Religious Fast. And of this I shall give an account in the following particulars. *First*, a truly Religious Fast consists in the afflicting of our Bodies by a strict abstinence, that so they may be fit and proper instruments to promote and help forward the grief and trouble of our minds. *Secondly*, in the humble Confession of our Sins to God with shame and confusion of face, and with a hearty contrition and sorrow for them. *Thirdly*, in an earnest deprecation of God's displeasure, and humble supplications to Him that he would avert his Judgments and turn away his Anger from us. *Fourthly*, in Intercession with God for such spiritual and temporal Blessings upon ourselves and others as are needfull and convenient. *Fifthly*, in Alms and Charity to the poor, that our Humiliation and Prayers may find acceptance with God. I do but mention these particulars, that I may more largely insist upon that which I mainly intended, and proposed to consider in the next place, namely

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II. What the Duty of this Day, appointed by their *Majesties* for a Solemn Humiliation and Repentance throughout the Nation, doth require at our hands. And this I shall endeavour to comprize in the following particulars. *First*, that we should humble our selves before God every one for his own personal Sins, whereby he hath provoked God, and increased the publique guilt, and done his part to bring down the judgments and vengeance of God upon the Nation. *Secondly*, that we should likewise heartily lament and bewail the Sins of others; especially the great and crying Sins of the Nation, committed by all Ranks and Orders of men amongst us, and whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty God hath been so justly incensed against us. *Thirdly*, we should most importunately deprecate those terrible Judgments of God to which these our great and crying Sins have so justly exposed us. *Fourthly*, we should pour out our earnest prayers and supplications to Almighty God for the preservation of their *Majesties* Sacred Persons, and for the establishment and prosperity of their Government, and for the good success of their Arms and Forces
by

by Sea and Land. *Fifthly*, our Fasting and Prayers should be accompanied with our Charity and Alms to the poor and needy. *Lastly*, we should prosecute our Repentance and good Resolutions to the actual Reformation and Amendment of our lives. Of these I shall, by God's assistance, speak as briefly and as plainly as I can, and so as every one of us may understand what God requires of him upon so solemn an Occasion as this.

First, we should humble our selves before God every one for his own personal Sins and miscarriages, whereby he hath provoked God, and increased the publique guilt, and done his part to bring down the Judgments and Vengeance of God upon the Nation. Our Humiliation and Repentance should begin with our selves and our own Sins, because Repentance is always design'd to end in Reformation; but there cannot be a general Reformation without the Reformation of particular persons which do constitute and make up the generality.

And this *Solomon* prescribes as the true method of a National Reformation, and the proper effect of a publick Humiliation and Repentance; in that admirable Prayer of his at the Dedicati-

1 Kings 8. 37, 38, 39, 40. on of the Temple: *If there be, says he, in the Land famine; if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; or if their Enemy besiege them in the Land of their Cities: whatever plague, whatever sickness there be; what prayer or supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy People Israel, WHO SHALL KNOW EVERY MAN THE PLAGUE OF HIS OWN HEART, and spread forth his hands towards this House: Then hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and doe, and give to every man according to his way, whose heart thou knowest, for thou, even thou onely, knowest the hearts of all the children of men; that they may fear thee, all the days which they live in the Land which thou gavest to their Fathers.*

You see here that in case of any publick Judgment or Calamity the Humiliation and Repentance of a Nation must begin with particular persons: *What prayer or supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy People Israel, WHO SHALL KNOW EVERY MAN THE PLAGUE OF HIS OWN HEART: Then hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive.* Particular persons must be convinced of their personal sins and transgressions, before God will hear the prayers and forgive the Sins of a Nation.

And

And because we cannot perform this part of confessing and bewailing our own personal Sins, and of testifying our particular repentance for them, in the publique Congregation, any other-wise than by joining with them in a general humiliation and repentance; therefore we should doe well, on the Day before the publique Fast, or at least the Morning before we go to the publique Assembly, to humble our selves before God in our Families, and especially in our Closets; confessing to Him, with great shame and sorrow, all the particular Sins and Offences, together with the several aggravations of them, which we have been guilty of against the Divine Majesty, so far as we are able to call them particularly to our remembrance; and earnestly to beg of God the pardon and forgiveness of them, for his mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*.

And so likewise, after we return from the Church, we should retire again into our Closets, and there renew our Repentance, with most serious and sincere resolutions of reforming in all those particulars which we have confessed and repented of. And if we would have our resolutions to come to any good, we must make them as distinct and particular as we can; and

charge it upon our selves, as to such and such Sins, for which we have declared our sorrow and repentance, that we will amend and doe better for the future.

And we should endeavour also, to fortifie these good resolutions, in the best manner we can, by serious consideration and by solemn promises of better obedience, and of a more conscientious care of our lives and all our actions for the future: And then, with the greatest earnestness and importunity, we should implore the assistance of God's grace and Holy Spirit to this purpose.

By this means the great end of a solemn Fast and Humiliation will be in some good measure attain'd, and not wholly defeated, as for the most part it is, by being hudled up and lost in a confused and general Repentance, which commonly ends together with the publique Assembly, without any real and permanent effect upon particular persons: Perhaps a great part of the Congregation may have been in some degree sorry for their Sins; but after all no man forsakes them, nor is the better for his sorrow, but leaves that behind him in the Church, and carries home with him the same affection for his

Sins

Sins which he had before, and a secret resolution not to leave them.

Thus it was with the People of the *Jews*. They had their solemn monthly Fasts, in which they made a great shew of Humiliation, *hanging down their heads like a bulrush for a day, and spreading sackcloth and ashes under them*: But there was no inward change of their minds, no real reformation of their lives; and as soon as ever the publique Solemnity was over, they turned every one to his former evil course. So God complains of them; *I hearkned, says He, and I heard, but* Jer. 8. 6. *they spake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, what have I done? but they turned every one to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battel. They spake not aright,* that is, they did not take the right method for an effectual Repentance: They humbled themselves indeed before God, and repented at random for the Sins of the Nation in general, which they were all of them ready enough to acknowledge, and to lay a heavy load of guilt upon the Community: But all this while, they never reflected upon themselves in particular; they had no sense, no conviction of their own personal faults and miscarriages, without which there can be no true

true general Repentance : *No man repented of his wickedness, saying, what have I done?*

And as they had no sense of their own particular Sins which they had been guilty of, so they had no thought of leaving them; but as soon as ever the publique Fasting and Humiliation was over, they return'd to them again with the same eager and furious appetite; *they turned every one to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battel*, that is, without any consideration, or sense of danger.

Secondly, we should likewise upon this Day, heartily lament and bewail the Sins of others; especially the great and crying Sins of the Nation, committed by all Ranks and Orders of men amongst us, and whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty God hath been so justly incensed against us.

This hath been the temper and practice of good men in all Ages, to be greatly troubled and afflicted for the Sins of others, as well as for their own; to mourn for them in secret, as the Prophet *Jeremy* does for the obstinacy and impenitency of the *Jews*, and for the terrible Judgments and Calamities which their Sins were

Jer. 13. 17. ready to bring down upon them: *But if ye will*

will not return, says he to that obdurate People, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, or obstinacy; and mine eyes shall weep sore and run down with tears, because the Lords Flock is carried away captive. And indeed almost the whole Prophecy of Jeremy, and his Book of Lamentations, are little else but a perpetual humiliation and mourning for the Sins of that People, and for the Judgments of God which he saw already inflicted, or foresaw to be coming upon them.

We reade likewise of Lot, when he dwelt in Sodom, how he was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: For that righteous man, saith St. Peter, dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing vexed his righteous soul, from day to day, with their unlawfull deeds.

*Holy David also, upon all occasions, testifies his great trouble and grief for the Sins which he saw committed by others, and was so affected with them that he trembled at the very thought of them: Rivers of tears, says he, run down mine *Psalms* 117. eyes, because men keep not thy Law: And in the ^{36.} same Psalm, Horror hath taken hold of me, because *v. 53.* of the wicked which forsake thy Law: And again, I *v. 158.* beheld the transgressours and was grieved, because they kept not thy Word. And*

And how does *Daniel* humble himself before God and mourn, and in the name of all the People, and of all Degrees and Orders of men among them, take shame to himself and them, for the great Sins which they had been guilty of:

Dan. 9. 5, 7. *We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly: O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face, as at this day: To our Kings, to our Princes, and to our Fathers, because we have sinned against thee.*

With what trouble and confusion does *Ezra*, upon a solemn Day of fasting and humiliation, acknowledge and bewail the Sins of the People:

Ezr. 9. 6, 7. *O my God, says he, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee my God: For our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespasses grown up unto the heavens: Since the days of our Fathers, we have been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our King, and our Priests, been delivered into the hands of the Kings of the Lands, &c.*

And thus also ought we, the People of this sinfull Land, upon this solemn Day of fasting and humiliation, to set our Sins in order before us, with all their heinous aggravations; and in the bitterness of our souls to lament and bewail
that

that general prevalence of Impiety and Vice which hath overspread the Nation, and diffused it self through all Ranks and Degrees of men, *Magistrates, Ministers and People.* I shall speak something more particularly concerning each of these.

1. The Sins of the *Magistrates* and those that are in Authority. They that make Laws for others, and are to see to the execution of them, ought to be strict observers of them themselves. For it must needs put a man not a little out of countenance to be severe upon those faults in others of which he knows himself to be notoriously guilty. And yet how many are there, whose place and duty it is to correct the vices and immoralities of others, who are far from being examples of vertue themselves? And therefore it is no wonder that there is so lame and unequal a distribution of justice in the Nation, and that *Magistrates* are so cold and slack in the discountenancing of Vice and Impiety, and in putting the good and wholesome Laws made against them in execution: As against the profanation of the Lord's Day, by secular business, by vain sports and pastimes, which by the very nature of them are apt to dissolve the minds

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of men into mirth and pleasure, and to carry them off from all serious thoughts of God and Religion, and from the meditations of another World; and to give the Devil an advantage, and an opportunity, which he never fails to take, to steal *the good seed*, the Word of God, which they have heard that Day, out of their hearts, and to make it of none effect: And which is yet worse, by lewd and sinfull practices, which are unlawfull at any time, but upon that Day, are a double breach and violation of God's Law.

And likewise by neglecting to put in execution the Laws against profane *Swearing* and *Cursing*, for which the Land mourns; and against *Drunkenness*, and *Adultery*, and *Fornication*, which are so common, and so impudently committed amongst us: whether they be Civil, or Ecclesiastical Laws; and it is hard to say which of them are most remissly executed.

And to mention no more, by neglecting to prosecute that horrible Sin of *Murther*, so frequently now committed in our Streets beyond the example of former Ages, with that severity and impartiality which is necessary to free the Nation from the guilt of that crying Sin
which

which calls so loud to Heaven for vengeance.

And all this, notwithstanding the Magistrates are under the Oath of God to put the Laws in due execution against all these Crimes, so far as they come to their knowledge, and fall under their cognisance.

2. The Sins of the *Ministers*, who serve at God's Altar, and watch over the Souls of men, whose blood will be required at their hands, if any of them perish through their fault and neglect. There is no reason to doubt, but that there are a good number of faithful Shepherds in the Land, who watch over their Flocks with great care and conscience, remembering the dreadful account which they must one day make to *Him who shall judge the quick and dead*, of the Souls committed to their charge.

But yet how grossly do many of us fail of the faithful discharge of the substantial parts of this high Office: wanting a just sense of the inestimable worth and value of the Souls of men for whom Christ died; taking little or no care to instruct them in the good knowledge of the Lord, and to lead them in the way to eternal happiness by an exemplary conversation.

Nay too many among us demean themselves

so scandalously, as perfectly to undermine the credit and effect of their Doctrine by leading lives so directly contrary to it; and to alienate their People from the Church, and to make them to abhor the Sacrifice and Service of the Lord by their wicked and unhallowed conversations: hereby exposing them to the craft of Seducers, and rendring them an easie prey to the *Emissaries* of the Church of Rome, or to any other Sect and Faction that pretends a greater zeal for Religion, or makes a better shew of a strict and unblameable life.

For who will regard or believe those Teachers, who give all the evidence that can be by their lives and actions, that they do not believe themselves and their own Doctrines? When all is said, the life and manners of the Preacher are the best eloquence, and have that dint and power of persuation in them, which no words, no art can equal. Who so lives as he speaks, does, as it is said of our Blessed Saviour, *speake as one that hath authority, and not as the Scribes: not as the Scribes*; whose words, notwithstanding all the formality and gravity with which they were deliver'd, did therefore want weight and force, because, as our Saviour tells us of them,

them, *they said, but did not*; their Lives were not answerable to their Doctrines: Whereas our Blessed Saviour therefore *spoke as never man spake*, because he liv'd as never man liv'd; so innocent, so usefull, so exemplary a life: He *was holy, harmles, and undefil'd*: He *did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips*: He *fulfilled all righteousness, and went about doing good*. This was that which made Him so powerfull a Preacher of *Righteousnes*; and we must necessarily fall so much short of *Him* in the authority and efficacy of our Sermons, as we do in the holiness and goodness of our Lives. Such a Preacher, and such a practice as that of our Blessed Saviour was, is every way fitted to reprove, and persuade, and reform Mankind.

We now live in an Age and Church, wherein they who are called to be the Teachers and Guides of Souls ought to take great heed both to their Doctrine and their Lives; that the Name of God may not be blasphem'd, and his holy Religion be brought into contempt by those, who, above all others, are most nearly concern'd to preserve and support the credit and honour of it.

And we cannot but see, how our Religion
and

and Church are beset and endanger'd on every side; by the rude assaults of Infidelity, and by the cunning arts of seducing Spirits, and by our own intestine Heats and Divisions: And it can never be sufficiently lamented, no though it were with tears of blood, that we whose particular charge and employment it is to build up the Souls of men in a holy Faith, and in the resolution of a good Life, should, for want of due instruction, and by the dissolute and profligate lives of too many among us, and by inflaming our needless Differences about lesser things, have so great a hand in pulling down Religion, and in betraying the Souls of men either to downright infidelity, or to a careless neglect and profane contempt of all Religion.

May not God justly expostulate this matter with us, as he did of old with the People of *Jer. 5. 30, 31.* the Jews? *A wonderfull and horrible thing is committed in the Land; the Prophets prophecy falsely, and the Priests bear rule by their means, and my People love to have it so, and what will ye doe in the end thereof? When they who are the Pastors and Guides of Souls, have by their ill conduct and management brought matters to that pass, that the generality of the People sit down contented*

tented with the worst state of things, and are become almost indifferent whether they have any Religion or not, what can the end of these things be, but that *the Kingdom of God will be taken from us, and given to a Nation that will bring forth the fruits of it?*

If ever there be a publick Reformation among us, it must begin at the House of God; and they who are the Ministers of Religion must lead on this work, and be more carefull and conscientious in the discharge of that high and holy Office which is committed to them by *the Great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls*. Else, what shall we say when God shall challenge us, as he once did the Pastours of the Jewish Church, by his Prophet, saying, *Where is the Flock that was Jer. 13. 20, given thee, thy beautifull Flock? what wilt thou say^{21.} when He shall punish thee?*

3. The Sins of the People; amongst whom there is almost an universal corruption and depravation of Manners; insomuch that Impiety and Vice seem to have overspread the face of the Nation; so that we may take up that sad complaint of the Prophet concerning the People of *Israel*, and apply it to our selves; that we are a *sinfull Nation, a People laden with iniquity, a Isai. 1. 4, 5. seed*

seed of evil doers ; that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint ; and that from the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in us, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.

We may justly stand amaz'd to consider, how the God of all patience is provok'd by us every day ; to think, how long he hath born with us and *suffered our manners* ; our open Profaneness, and Infidelity ; our great Immoralities, and gross Hypocrisy ; our insolent contempt of Religion, and our ill-favour'd counterfeiting of it for low and sordid ends : And, which is the most melancholy consideration of all the rest, we seem to be degenerated to that degree, that it is very much to be fear'd, there is hardly integrity enough left amongst us to save us.

And then if we consider further our most uncharitable and unchristian Divisions, to the endangering both of our Reformed Religion, and of the Civil Rights and Liberties of the Nation : Our incorrigibleness under the Judgments of God which we have seen abroad in the Earth, and which have in a very severe and terrible manner been inflicted upon these Kingdoms, that the *Inhabitants thereof might learn righteousness* : Our insensibleness of the Hand of God, so visible in
his

his late Providences towards us, and in the many merciful and wonderful Deliverances which from time to time He hath wrought for us.

And lastly, if we reflect upon our horrible Ingratitude to God our Saviour and mighty Deliverer; and to Them likewise whom He hath so signally honour'd in making them the happy means and Instruments of our Deliverance: And this, not only express'd by a bold contempt of their Authority, but by a most unnatural conspiracy against Them with the greatest Enemies not onely to the Peace of the Nation, but likewise to the Reformed Religion therein profess'd and by Law established; and to the interest of it all the World over.

So that we may say with *Ezra*, and now, *Ezra. 9.*
O our God, what shall we say unto thee after^{6.}
this? And may not God likewise say to us, as
 He did more then once to the *Jews*? *Shall I*
not visit for these things, saith the Lord, and
shall not my soul be avenged on such a Nation as
this?

Thirdly, we should likewise, upon this Day,
 earnestly deprecate God's displeasure, and
 make our humble Supplications to Him, that
 He would be graciously pleas'd to avert those
 E terrible

terrible Judgments which hang over us, and which we have just cause to fear may fall upon us; and that He would be entreated by us at last to be appeas'd towards us, and to turn from the fierceness of his Anger.

Joel 2.
15, 16,
17. This we find the People of God were wont to do upon their Solemn days of Fasting and Prayer, and this God expressly enjoins: *Blow the Trumpet in Zion, sanctify a Fast, call a solemn Assembly; gather the People, sanctify the Congregation, assemble the Elders, &c. Let the Priests, the Ministers of the Lord, weep between the Porch and the Altar, and let them say, Spare thy People, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the Heathen should rule over them: Wherefore should they say among the People, where is their God?*

And to this earnest deprecation of his Judgments God promiseth a gracious answer; for
v. 18. *so it immediately follows: Then will the Lord be jealous for his Land, and pity his People.*

And thus likewise Daniel, when he set his
Dan. 9.3. *face to seek the Lord God, by prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes, does in a most humble and earnest manner deprecate the displeasure of God towards his People,*
and

and beg of Him to remove his Judgments and to turn away his anger from them, O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let ^{Ver. 16.} ^{17, 18.} ^{19.} thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy City Jerusalem, thy Holy Mountain: Because for our sins, and for the iniquity of our Fathers, Jerusalem and thy People are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O God, hear the prayer of thy Servant and his supplication; and cause thy face to shine upon thy Sanctuary which is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear and hear, open thine eyes and behold our desolations, and the City which is called by thy Name: For we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercy: O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do; defer not for thine own sake, O my God; for thy City and thy People are called by thy Name.

And thus also should We, upon this Solemn Occasion, cry mightily unto God, and with the greatest importunity deprecate those terrible Judgments which we so righteously have deserved, and to which the great and crying Sins of the whole Nation have so justly exposed us: Humbly beseeching Him, not for our righteousness,

ness, but for his great mercy; for his own Names sake, and because we are his People and are called by his Name, and because his Holy Truth and Religion are profess'd amongst us; that He would be pleas'd to hear the prayers of his Servants and their supplications which they have made before him this Day, *for the Lord's sake.*

Fourthly, we should likewise, upon this Day, pour out our most earnest Supplications to Almighty God, for the preservation of their *Majesties* sacred Persons, and for the prosperity and establishment of their Government, and for the good success of their Arms and Forces by Sea and Land.

And more especially, since His *Majesty*, with so many Confederate Princes and States of *Europe*, is engaged in so necessary an undertaking for the Common good of *Christendom*, and for the mutual preservation and recovery of their respective Rights: We should earnestly implore the favour and assistance of Almighty God in so just and glorious a Cause, against the common Invader and oppressor of the Rights and Liberties of Mankind.

And

And that of his infinite Goodness He would be graciously pleased to take the Person of our *Soveraign Lord the King* into the particular care and protection of his Providence: That He would secure his precious Life from all secret Attempts, and from open Violence: That He would give his Angels Charge over him, and cover his head in the day of Battel, and crown it with victory over his Enemies, and restore Him to us again in safety.

And that He would likewise preserve and direct the *Queen's Majesty*, in whose hands the Administration of the Government is at present so happily plac'd: That He would give Her wisdom and resolution for such a Time as this, and support and carry Her through all the Difficulties of it.

And lastly, that He would bless them Both with a long Life, and a peaceful and happy Reign over us; that *under them we may live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.*

Fifthly, our Fasting and humiliation should be accompanied with our Alms and Charity to the poor and needy: And we should every one of us, according to the counsel given by
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Dan. 4. the Prophet to King *Nebuchadnezzar*, break off
 27. *our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthning of our tranquillity*; hereby intimating that if there be any way to prevent or remove the Judgments of God, and to prolong the tranquillity and happiness of Prince and People, a sincere Repentance, and a great Charity to them that are in necessity and distress, are most likely to prevail with God, not only to respite the ruine of a sinful People, but to incline Him to thoughts of peace towards them: For so he promiseth to the *Jews* upon their sincere Repentance, and earnest Supplication to Him, which are alwayes accompanied with
 Jer. 29. Charity to the poore: *For I know the thoughts*
 11, 12, *which I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts*
 13. *of peace, and not of evil, to give you an unexpected end: Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you: And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*

And I have often thought that the extraordinary Charity of this whole Nation, and of our pious Princes who are so ready to every good work and such bright and shining Examples in
 this

this kind, more than once so seasonably extended to the relief of our distressed Brethren, who fled hither for refuge from the Rage and Cruelty of their Persecutors: I say, I have often thought, that this very thing, next to the infinite mercy and goodness of Almighty God, hath had a very particular influence upon our preservation and deliverance from those terrible Calamities which were just ready to rush in upon us. And what cause have we to thank God who hath allotted to us this more blessed and merciful part, to *give* and not to *receive*; to be free from persecution our selves, that so we might be in a capacity to give refuge and relief to them that were persecuted?

There are but few that have the faith to believe it, but certainly Charity to the poor is a great security to us in times of evil: So *David* assures us, speaking of the *righteous* or *Charitable* man, *He shall not, sayes he, be afraid in the evil time, and in the days of Dearth he shall be satisfy'd.*

And so likewise in Times of publick Distress, when we are beset with cruel and powerful Enemies, who if God were not on our side would swallow us up, the publick Charity of a Nation

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on hath many times prov'd its best safeguard and shield: *It shall fight for thee*, saith the Son of *Sirach*, speaking of the Charity of Almes, *against thine Enemy, more than a mighty shield and strong spear.*

And of this, as I said before, I doubt not but We of this Nation, by the great mercy and goodness of God to us, have had happy experience in our late wonderful Deliverance under the Conduct and Valour of one of the best and bravest of Princes; to whom by too many among us, the most unworthy and unthankful returns have been made for all the unwearied pains he hath undergone, and for the many desperate hazards to which he hath exposed himself for our sakes, that ever were made to so great and generous a Benefactor: To so great a Benefactor, I say, not onely to these Nations, but even to all *Europe*, in asserting and maintaining their Liberties against the insolent pride and unjust encroachments of one of the greatest Oppressors the World hath known for many Ages: Of whom it may be said as *Job* doth of the

Job 41.

33. 34.

Leviathan, upon the earth there is not his like: I am glad I cannot apply what immediately fol-

lows,

Then will I hear in Heaven, and forgive their sin, and heal their Land.

And if this were the happy effect of our Prayers and Humiliation this Day, to turn us from *Zeck. 8.* our wicked ways; God would then turn away ^{19.} his anger from us; and, as he promised to the Jews by the Prophet Zechary, He would turn these our monthly Fasts into joy, and gladness, and cheerful Feasts; as he hath in a great measure already done, Blessed be his great and glorious Name.

But if we will not hearken and obey, can we expect that God should deliver us from the hands of our Enemyes that we may sin against Him without fear all the dayes of our Lives? To what purpose should the Providence of God take so much care to preserve our Religion to us, when we make no better use of it for the direction and government of our Lives? When it serves most of us, onely to talk of it; and too many amongst us, to talk against it, to deride it, and despitefully to use it. If this be the truth of our Case, what can we say, why the Kingdom of God should not be taken from us and given to a Nation that will bring forth the fruits of it? What can

we say, why our Candlestick should not be remov'd, and the light of the glorious Gospel of *Christ* which we have so long enjoyed, and so long rebelled against, should not be utterly extinguish'd amongst us?

And if I cannot prevail with you to come to these good Resolutions, and to make them good: If you will not be perswaded to praise, yet be pleas'd to attend to what we say: Hear our words at least, if ye will not do them. This the People of the *Jews* would do, when they were at the worst: So God tells the Prophet concerning them: *They come unto thee, as the People cometh; and they sit before thee, as my People; and they hear thy words, but they will not do them.*

*Ezek. 33.
31.*

I had much rather at any time have occasion to praise than to reprove, especially in this great Assembly: And yet it is not to be dissembled, that the behaviour of too many in this Place is frequently so careless and irreverent, as is very misbecoming those who are in the more peculiar Presence of the great and glorious *Majesty of Heaven and Earth*, and profess at that very time to worship Him.

I am sure, we have a better Pattern perpetually

tually before us; of a decent and unaffected devotion, of a most serious and steady attention, without wandring, without diversion, and without drowsiness: such an Example as I cannot but hope will in a short time gain upon us all, and by a more gentle and silent reproof win us to the imitation of it.

And if we could but be prevail'd upon to demean our selves with that Reverence, and to hear with that Attention, which becomes the Worship and the Word of God, it might then be hop'd that we would consider what is said; and consideration would probably work conviction, and conviction bring us to a better mind, and to a firm purpose of doing what we are inwardly convinc'd it is both our duty and our interest to do.

Let us then go away from this Solemnity, with a resolution to do every one what we ought; truly and earnestly to repent us of our sins past, and to lead a new life for the future; to fear that *great and terrible God* in whose presence we have humbled our selves this Day; and to *turn to Him that hath smitten us*, lest we provoke him to *punish us yet seven times more*, and after that *seven times more for our sins*, and
for

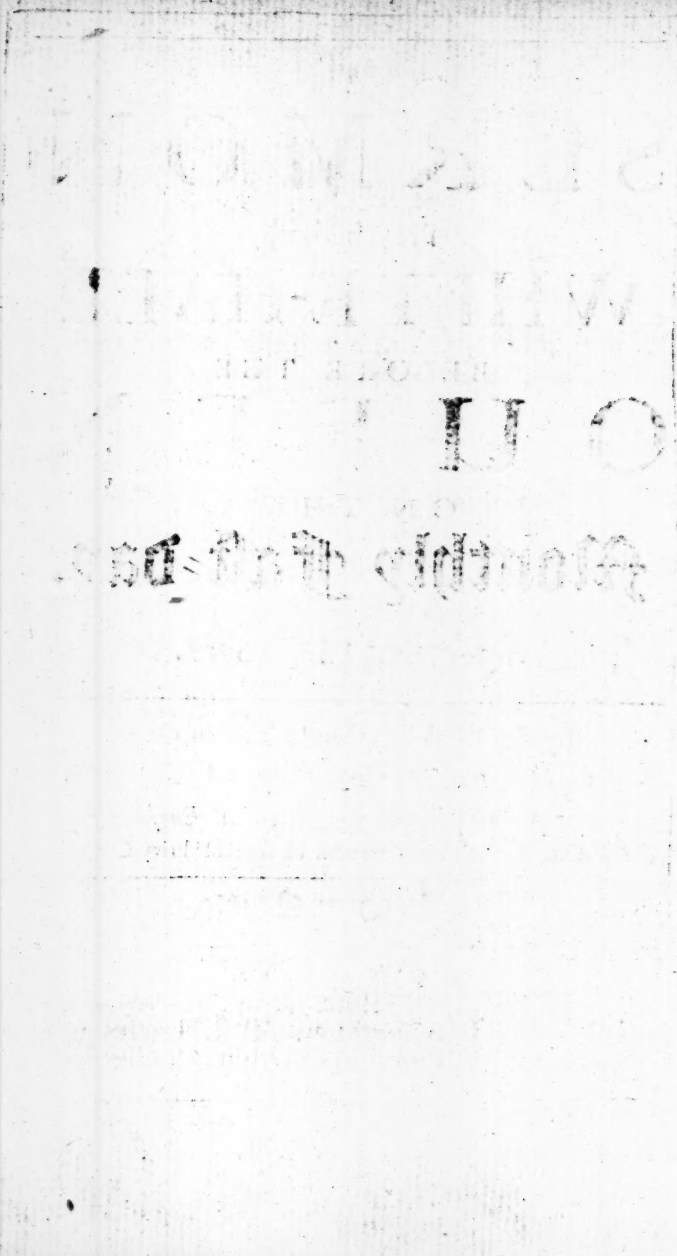
A
SERMON
Preached at
WHITE-HALL
BEFORE THE
QUEEN
ON THE
Monthly Fast-day,
September 16th 1691.

By the Most Reverend Father in God,
JOHN Lord Arch-Bishop of Canterbury,
Primate and Metropolitan of all *England*:
And One of Their Majesties most Honourable Privy-Council.

The Second Edition.

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ZECHARIAH VII. 5.

Speak unto all the People of the Land, and to the Priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, DID YE AT ALL FAST UNTO ME, EVEN UNTO ME?

IN the beginning of this Chapter the People of the *Jews*, who were then rebuilding the Temple at *Jerusalem*, and had already far advanced the work, though it was not perfectly finish'd till about two years after, send to the *Priests* and the *Prophets*, to enquire of them, whether they should still continue the *Fast* of the *fifth* month, which they had begun in *Babylon* and continued to observe during the seventy years of their Captivity, in a sad remembrance of the destruction of the City and Temple of *Jerusalem*; or should not now rather turn it into a Day of feasting and gladness?

To this enquiry God by his Prophet returns an answer in this, and the following Chapter. And first he expostulates with them concerning those their monthly Fasts, whether they did in-

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deed

deed deserve that name, and were not rather a mere shew and pretence of a Religious Fast, vers. 4, 5. Then came the word of the Lord of Hosts unto me, saying; Speak unto all the People of the Land, and to the Priests, saying; When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me? The enquiry was particularly concerning the Fast of the Fifth month, because the occasion of that was more considerable than of all the other; but the answer of God mentions the Fasts of the fifth and seventh month, these two being probably observ'd with greater solemnity than the other.

But for our clearer understanding of this, it will be requisite to consider the original and occasion of all their monthly Fasts: which as appears from other places of Scripture; in short was this: When the Jews were carried away Captive into Babylon, in a deep sense of this great Judgment of God upon them for their Sins, and of the heavy affliction which they lay under, they appointed four annual Fasts, which they observed during their seventy years Captivity; viz. the Fast of the fourth month, in remembrance of the Enemies breaking through the

the Wall of Jerusalem, which we find mention'd, Jer. 52. 16, 17. The Fast of the fifth month, in memory of the destruction of the City and Temple of Jerusalem, vers. 12, 13. The Fast of the seventh month, in remembrance of the slaying of Gedaliah, upon which followed the dispersion of the Jews, of which we have an account, Jer. 42. 1, 2. And the Fast of the tenth month, in memory of the beginning of the Siege of Jerusalem, of which we find mention, 2 Kings 25.

In this order we find these four annual Fasts mention'd Zechar. 8. 19. not according to the order of the Events, but of the Months of the several years in which these Events happened: And there likewise God gives a full answer to this enquiry concerning the continuance of these annual Fasts, namely, that they should for the future be turned into solemn Days of joy and gladness. And the word of the Lord of Hosts Zech. 8. 18, came unto me, saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the Fast of the fourth month, and the Fast of the fifth, and the Fast of the seventh, and the Fast of the tenth, shall be to the House of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerfull Feasts.

I return now to the Text, *Did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* that is, did these Fasts truly serve to any Religious end and purpose? Did not the People content themselves with a mere external shew and performance, without any inward affliction and humiliation of their Souls, in order to a real repentance? Did they not still go on in their sins; nay, and add to them upon these Occasions, fasting for strife and debate and oppression? In a word, were they not worse rather than better for them? And therefore God had no regard to them, as it follows in this Chapter; *Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying; Execute judgment, and shew mercy and compassion every man to his brother; and oppress not the widows nor the fatherless, the stranger nor the poor; and let none of you imagine mischief against his brother in your heart: But they refused to hearken, and pull'd away the shoulder, and stopped their ears that they should not hear; yea, they made their heart as an Adamant stone, lest they should hear the Law and the words which the Lord of Hosts hath sent by his spirit in the former Prophets: Therefore came great wrath from the Lord of Hosts: Therefore it is come to pass, that as He cryed and they would not hear; so they cryed, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of Hosts.* So

Verf. 9, 10,
11, 12, 13.

So that notwithstanding these outward Solemnities of Fasting and Prayer, here was nothing of a Religious Fast; *did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* They were sensible of the Judgments of God which were broken in upon them, but they did not turn from their sins, but persisted still in their obstinacy and disobedience.

And what God here by the Prophet *Zechary* calls *fasting unto Him, even unto Him*, the Prophet *Isaiah* calls the Fast which God hath chosen, and an acceptable day to the Lord. *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a Fast as I have chosen, a Day for a man to afflict his Soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a Fast and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house; when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy self from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth*

forth as the morning, and thy salvation shall spring forth speedily: Then shalt thou call and the Lord shall answer, &c.

From all which passages we may easily understand wherein these *Monthly Fasts* of the Jews were defective, and what was the fault that God finds with them when he expostulates so severely in the Text: *When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh Month; even these seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* In the general the fault which God finds with them was this, that these Solemnities did not serve any real end and purpose of Religion, but fail'd in their main design, which was a sincere repentance and reformation of their lives: For which reason He tells them that they were not at all acceptable to Him, nor esteem'd by Him as perform'd unto Him, because they did not answer the true intention and design of them.

My work at this time shall be, *First*, to consider in general what it is to *fast* unto God, that is, to keep a truly Religious Fast. *Secondly*, to bring the matter nearer to our selves, I shall consider more particularly, what the Duty of this Day, appointed by their *Majesties* for a Solemn

lemn Humiliation and Repentance throughout the Nation, does require at our hands.

I. I shall consider in general what it is to fast unto God; that is, to keep a truly Religious Fast. And of this I shall give an account in the following particulars. *First*, a truly Religious Fast consists in the afflicting of our Bodies by a strict abstinence, that so they may be fit and proper instruments to promote and help forward the grief and trouble of our minds. *Secondly*, in the humble Confession of our Sins to God with shame and confusion of face, and with a hearty contrition and sorrow for them. *Thirdly*, in an earnest deprecation of God's displeasure, and humble supplications to Him that he would avert his Judgments and turn away his Anger from us. *Fourthly*, in Intercession with God for such spiritual and temporal Blessings upon our selves and others as are needfull and convenient. *Fifthly*, in Alms and Charity to the poor, that our Humiliation and Prayers may find acceptance with God. I do but mention these particulars, that I may more largely insist upon that which I mainly intended, and proposed to consider in the next place, namely

II. What

- II. II. What the Duty of this Day, appointed by their *Majesties* for a Solemn Humiliation and Repentance throughout the Nation, doth require at our hands. And this I shall endeavour to comprize in the following particulars. *First*, that we should humble our selves before God every one for his own personal Sins, whereby he hath provoked God, and increased the publique guilt, and done his part to bring down the judgments and vengeance of God upon the Nation. *Secondly*, that we should likewise heartily lament and bewail the Sins of others; especially the great and crying Sins of the Nation, committed by all Ranks and Orders of men amongst us, and whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty God hath been so justly incensed against us. *Thirdly*, we should most importunately deprecate those terrible Judgments of God to which these our great and crying Sins have so justly exposed us. *Fourthly*, we should pour out our earnest prayers and supplications to Almighty God for the preservation of their *Majesties* Sacred Persons, and for the establishment and prosperity of their Government, and for the good success of their Arms and Forces
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by Sea and Land. *Fifthly*, our Fasting and Prayers should be accompanied with our Charity and Alms to the poor and needy. *Lastly*, we should prosecute our Repentance and good Resolutions to the actual Reformation and Amendment of our lives. Of these I shall, by God's assistance, speak as briefly and as plainly as I can, and so as every one of us may understand what God requires of him upon so solemn an Occasion as this.

First, we should humble our selves before God every one for his own personal Sins and miscarriages, whereby he hath provoked God, and increased the publique guilt, and done his part to bring down the Judgments and Vengeance of God upon the Nation. Our Humiliation and Repentance should begin with our selves and our own Sins, because Repentance is always design'd to end in Reformation; but there cannot be a general Reformation without the Reformation of particular persons which do constitute and make up the generality.

And this *Solomon* prescribes as the true method of a National Reformation, and the proper effect of a publick Humiliation and Repentance; in that admirable Prayer of his at the Dedicati-

1 Kings 8. on of the Temple: *If there be, says he, in the*
 37, 38, 39, *Land famine; if there be pestilence, blasting, mil-*
 40. *dew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; or if their Ene-*
my besiege them in the Land of their Cities: what-
ever plague, whatever sickness there be; what prayer
or supplication soever be made by any man, or by all
thy People Israel, WHO SHALL KNOW EVERY
MAN THE PLAGUE OF HIS OWN HEART,
and spread forth his hands towards this House: Then
hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive,
and doe, and give to every man according to his way,
whose heart thou knowest, for thou, even thou onely,
knowest the hearts of all the children of men; that
they may fear thee, all the days which they live in the
Land which thou gavest to their Fathers.

You see here that in case of any publick Judgment or Calamity the Humiliation and Repentance of a Nation must begin with particular persons: *What prayer or supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy People Israel, WHO SHALL KNOW EVERY MAN THE PLAGUE OF HIS OWN HEART: Then hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive.* Particular persons must be convinced of their personal sins and transgressions, before God will hear the prayers and forgive the Sins of a Nation.

And

And because we cannot perform this part of confessing and bewailing our own personal Sins, and of testifying our particular repentance for them, in the publique Congregation, any other-wise than by joining with them in a general humiliation and repentance; therefore we should doe well, on the Day before the publique Fast, or at least the Morning before we go to the publique Assembly, to humble our selves before God in our Families, and especially in our Closets; confessing to Him, with great shame and sorrow, all the particular Sins and Offences, together with the several aggravations of them, which we have been guilty of against the Divine Majesty, so far as we are able to call them particularly to our remembrance; and earnestly to beg of God the pardon and forgiveness of them, for his mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*.

And so likewise, after we return from the Church, we should retire again into our Closets, and there renew our Repentance, with most serious and sincere resolutions of reforming in all those particulars which we have confessed and repented of. And if we would have our resolutions to come to any good, we must make them as distinct and particular as we can; and

charge it upon our selves, as to such and such Sins, for which we have declared our sorrow and repentance, that we will amend and doe better for the future.

And we should endeavour also, to fortifie these good resolutions, in the best manner we can, by serious consideration and by solemn promises of better obedience, and of a more conscientious care of our lives and all our actions for the future: And then, with the greatest earnestness and importunity, we should implore the assistance of God's grace and Holy Spirit to this purpose.

By this means the great end of a solemn Fast and Humiliation will be in some good measure attain'd, and not wholly defeated, as for the most part it is, by being huddled up and lost in a confused and general Repentance, which commonly ends together with the publique Assembly, without any real and permanent effect upon particular persons: Perhaps a great part of the Congregation may have been in some degree sorry for their Sins; but after all no man forsakes them, nor is the better for his sorrow, but leaves that behind him in the Church, and carries home with him the same affection for his Sins

Sins which he had before, and a secret resolution not to leave them.

Thus it was with the People of the Jews. They had their solemn monthly Fasts, in which they made a great shew of Humiliation, *hanging down their heads like a bulrush for a day, and spreading sackcloth and ashes under them*: But there was no inward change of their minds, no real reformation of their lives; and as soon as ever the publick Solemnity was over, they turned every one to his former evil course. So God complains of them; *I hearkned, says He, and I heard, but Jer. 8. 6. they spake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, what have I done? but they turned every one to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battel. They spake not aright,* that is, they did not take the right method for an effectual Repentance: They humbled themselves indeed before God, and repented at random for the Sins of the Nation in general, which they were all of them ready enough to acknowledge, and to lay a heavy load of guilt upon the Community: But all this while, they never reflected upon themselves in particular; they had no sense, no conviction of their own personal faults and miscarriages, without which there can be no true

true general Repentance : *No man repented of his wickedness, saying, what have I done?*

And as they had no sense of their own particular Sins which they had been guilty of, so they had no thought of leaving them; but as soon as ever the publique Fasting and Humiliation was over, they return'd to them again with the same eager and furious appetite; *they turned every one to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battel*, that is, without any consideration, or sense of danger.

Secondly, we should likewise upon this Day, heartily lament and bewail the Sins of others; especially the great and crying Sins of the Nation, committed by all Ranks and Orders of men amongst us, and whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty God hath been so justly incensed against us.

This hath been the temper and practice of good men in all Ages, to be greatly troubled and afflicted for the Sins of others, as well as for their own; to mourn for them in secret, as the Prophet *Jeremy* does for the obstinacy and impenitency of the *Jews*, and for the terrible Judgments and Calamities which their Sins were

Jer. 13. 17. ready to bring down upon them: *But if ye will*

will not return, says he to that obdurate People, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, or obstinacy; and mine eyes shall weep sore and run down with tears, because the Lords Flock is carried away captive. And indeed almost the whole Prophecy of Jeremy, and his Book of Lamentations, are little else but a perpetual humiliation and mourning for the Sins of that People, and for the Judgments of God which he saw already inflicted, or foresaw to be coming upon them.

We read likewise of Lot, when he dwelt in Sodom, how he was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: For that righteous man, saith St. Peter, dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing vexed his righteous soul, from day to day, with their unlawfull deeds.

Holy David also, upon all occasions, testifies his great trouble and grief for the Sins which he saw committed by others, and was so affected with them that he trembled at the very thought of them: Rivers of tears, says he, run down mine *Psalm 117.* eyes, because men keep not thy Law: And in the ^{36.} same Psalm, Horror hath taken hold of me, because *v. 53.* of the wicked which forsake thy Law: And again, I *v. 158.* beheld the transgressours and was grieved, because they kept not thy Word. And

And how does *Daniel* humble himself before God and mourn, and in the name of all the People, and of all Degrees and Orders of men among them, take shame to himself and them, for the great Sins which they had been guilty of?

Dan. 9. 5, 7, 8. *We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly: O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face, as at this day: To our Kings, to our Princes, and to our Fathers, because we have sinned against thee.*

With what trouble and confusion does *Ezra*, upon a solemn Day of fasting and humiliation, acknowledge and bewail the Sins of the People?

Ezr. 9. 6, 7. *O my God, says he, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee my God: For our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespasses grown up unto the heavens: Since the days of our Fathers, we have been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our King, and our Priests, been delivered into the hands of the Kings of the Lands, &c.*

And thus also ought we, the People of this sinfull Land, upon this solemn Day of fasting and humiliation, to set our Sins in order before us, with all their heinous aggravations; and in the bitterness of our souls to lament and bewail
that

that general prevalence of Impiety and Vice which hath overspread the Nation, and diffused it self through all Ranks and Degrees of men, *Magistrates, Ministers and People*. I shall speak something more particularly concerning each of these.

1. The Sins of the *Magistrates* and those that are in Authority. They that make Laws for others, and are to see to the execution of them, ought to be strict observers of them themselves. For it must needs put a man not a little out of countenance to be severe upon those faults in others of which he knows himself to be notoriously guilty. And yet how many are there, whose place and duty it is to correct the vices and immoralities of others, who are far from being examples of vertue themselves? And therefore it is no wonder that there is so lame and unequal a distribution of justice in the Nation, and that *Magistrates* are so cold and slack in the discountenancing of Vice and Impiety, and in putting the good and wholesome Laws made against them in execution: As against the profanation of the Lord's Day, by secular business, by vain sports and pastimes, which by the very nature of them are apt to dissolve the minds

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of

of men into mirth and pleasure, and to carry them off from all serious thoughts of God and Religion, and from the meditations of another World; and to give the Devil an advantage, and an opportunity, which he never fails to take, to steal *the good seed*, the Word of God, which they have heard that Day, out of their hearts, and to make it of none effect: And which is yet worse, by lewd and sinfull practices, which are unlawfull at any time, but upon that Day, are a double breach and violation of God's Law.

And likewise by neglecting to put in execution the Laws against profane *Swearing* and *Cursing*, for which the Land mourns; and against *Drunkenness*, and *Adultery*, and *Fornication*, which are so common, and so impudently committed amongst us: whether they be Civil, or Ecclesiastical Laws; and it is hard to say which of them are most remissly executed.

And to mention no more, by neglecting to prosecute that horrible Sin of *Murther*, so frequently now committed in our Streets beyond the example of former Ages, with that severity and impartiality which is necessary to free the Nation from the guilt of that crying Sin
which

which calls so loud to Heaven for vengeance.

And all this, notwithstanding the Magistrates are under the Oath of God to put the Laws in due execution against all these Crimes, so far as they come to their knowledge, and fall under their cognisance.

2. The Sins of the *Ministers*, who serve at God's Altar, and watch over the Souls of men, whose blood will be required at their hands, if any of them perish through their fault and neglect. There is no reason to doubt, but that there are a good number of faithfull Shepherds in the Land, who watch over their Flocks with great care and conscience, remembring the dreadfull account which they must one day make to *Him who shall judge the quick and dead*, of the Souls committed to their charge.

But yet how grossly do many of us fail of the faithfull discharge of the substantial parts of this high Office? wanting a just sense of the inestimable worth and value of the Souls of men for whom Christ died; taking little or no care to instruct them in the good knowledge of the Lord, and to lead them in the way to eternal happiness by an exemplary conversation.

Nay too many among us demean themselves

so scandalously, as perfectly to undermine the credit and effect of their Doctrine by leading lives so directly contrary to it; and to alienate their People from the Church, and to make them to abhor the Sacrifice and Service of the Lord by their wicked and unhallowed conversations: hereby exposing them to the craft of Seducers, and rendring them an easie prey to the *Emissaries* of the Church of *Rome*, or to any other Sect and Faction that pretends a greater zeal for Religion, or makes a better shew of a strict and unblameable life.

For who will regard or believe those Teachers, who give all the evidence that can be by their lives and actions, that they do not believe themselves and their own Doctrines? When all is said, the life and manners of the Preacher are the best eloquence, and have that dint and power of persuation in them, which no words, no art can equal. Who so lives as he speaks, does, as it is said of our Blessed Saviour, *Speak as one that hath authority, and not as the Scribes: not as the Scribes*; whose words, notwithstanding all the formality and gravity with which they were deliver'd, did therefore want weight and force, because, as our Saviour tells us of them,

them, *they said, but did not*; their Lives were not answerable to their Doctrines: Whereas our Blessed Saviour therefore *spoke as never man spake*, because he liv'd as never man liv'd; so innocent, so usefull, so exemplary a life: He *was holy, harmles, and undefil'd*: He *did no sin*, neither was guile found in his lips: He *fulfilled all righteousness, and went about doing good*. This was that which made Him so powerfull a Preacher of *Righteousness*; and we must necessarily fall so much short of *Him* in the authority and efficacy of our Sermons, as we do in the holiness and goodness of our Lives. Such a Preacher, and such a practice as that of our Blessed Saviour was, is every way fitted to reprove, and persuade, and reform Mankind.

We now live in an Age and Church, wherein they who are called to be the Teachers and Guides of Souls ought to take great heed both to their Doctrine and their Lives; that the Name of God may not be blasphem'd, and his holy Religion be brought into contempt by those, who, above all others, are most nearly concern'd to preserve and support the credit and honour of it.

And we cannot but see, how our Religion
and

and Church are beset and endanger'd on every side ; by the rude assaults of Infidelity, and by the cunning arts of seducing Spirits, and by our own intestine Heats and Divisions : And it can never be sufficiently lamented , no though it were with tears of blood , that we whose particular charge and employment it is to build up the Souls of men in a holy Faith, and in the resolution of a good Life , should , for want of due instruction, and by the dissolute and profligate lives of too many among us, and by inflaming our needless Differences about lesser things, have so great a hand in pulling down Religion , and in betraying the Souls of men either to downright infidelity , or to a careless neglect and profane contempt of all Religion.

May not God justly expostulate this matter with us, as he did of old with the People of the Jews ? *A wonderfull and horrible thing is committed in the Land ; the Prophets prophecy falsely, and the Priests bear rule by their means, and my People love to have it so , and what will ye doe in the end thereof ?* When they who are the Pastors and Guides of Souls, have by their ill conduct and management brought matters to that pass, that the generality of the People sit down contented

tented with the worst state of things, and are become almost indifferent whether they have any Religion or not, what can the end of these things be, but that *the Kingdom of God will be taken from us, and given to a Nation that will bring forth the fruits of it?*

If ever there be a publick Reformation among us, it must begin at the House of God; and they who are the Ministers of Religion must lead on this work, and be more carefull and conscientious in the discharge of that high and holy Office which is committed to them by *the Great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls*. Else, what shall we say when God shall challenge us, as he once did the Pastours of the *Jewish Church*, by his Prophet, saying, *Where is the Flock that was Jer. 13, 20, given thee, thy beautifull Flock? what wilt thou say 21. when He shall punish thee?*

3. The Sins of the People; amongst whom there is almost an universal corruption and depravation of Manners; insomuch that Impiety and Vice seem to have overspread the face of the Nation; so that we may take up that sad complaint of the Prophet concerning the People of *Israel*, and apply it to our selves; that we *are a sinfull Nation, a People laden with iniquity, a Isai. 1. 4, 5. seed*

seed of evil doers ; that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint ; and that from the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in us, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.

We may justly stand amaz'd to consider, how the God of all patience is provok'd by us every day ; to think, how long he hath born with us and *suffered our manners* ; our open Profaneness, and Infidelity ; our great Immoralities, and gross Hypocrisy ; our insolent contempt of Religion, and our ill-favour'd counterfeiting of it for low and sordid ends : And, which is the most melancholy consideration of all the rest, we seem to be degenerated to that degree, that it is very much to be fear'd, there is hardly integrity enough left amongst us to save us.

And then if we consider further our most uncharitable and unchristian Divisions, to the endangering both of our Reformed Religion, and of the Civil Rights and Liberties of the Nation : Our incorrigibleness under the Judgments of God which we have seen abroad in the Earth, and which have in a very severe and terrible manner been inflicted upon these Kingdoms, that the *Inhabitants thereof might learn righteousness* : Our insensibleness of the Hand of God, so visible in
his

his late Providences towards us, and in the many merciful and wonderful Deliverances which from time to time He hath wrought for us.

And lastly, if we reflect upon our horrible Ingratitude to God our Saviour and mighty Deliverer; and to Them likewise whom He hath so signally honour'd in making them the happy means and Instruments of our Deliverance: And this, not only express'd by a bold contempt of their Authority, but by a most unnatural conspiracy against Them with the greatest Enemies not onely to the Peace of the Nation, but likewise to the Reformed Religion therein profess'd and by Law established; and to the interest of it all the World over.

So that we may say with *Ezra*, and now, *Ezra. 9.*
O our God, what shall we say unto thee after this? And may not God likewise say to us, as He did more then once to the Jews? Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, and shall not my soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?

Thirdly, we should likewise, upon this Day, earnestly deprecate God's displeasure, and make our humble Supplications to Him, that He would be graciously pleas'd to avert those

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terrible

terrible Judgments which hang over us, and which we have just cause to fear may fall upon us; and that He would be entreated by us at last to be appeas'd towards us, and to turn from the fierceness of his Anger.

Joel 2.
15, 16,
17. This we find the People of God were wont to do upon their Solemn days of Fasting and Prayer, and this God expressly enjoins: *Blow the Trumpet in Zion, sanctify a Fast, call a solemn Assembly; gather the People, sanctify the Congregation, assemble the Elders, &c. Let the Priests, the Ministers of the Lord, weep between the Porch and the Altar, and let them say, Spare thy People, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the Heathen should rule over them: Wherefore should they say among the People, where is their God?*

And to this earnest deprecation of his Judgments God promiseth a gracious answer; for
v. 18. *so it immediately follows: Then will the Lord be jealous for his Land, and pity his People.*

And thus likewise *Daniel*, when he set his
Dan. 9.3 *face to seek the Lord God, by prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes, does in a most humble and earnest manner deprecate the displeasure of God towards his People,*
and

and beg of Him to remove his Judgments and to turn away his anger from them, O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let ^{Ver. 16.} ^{17, 18.} thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy ^{19.} City Jerusalem, thy Holy Mountain: Because for our sins, and for the iniquity of our Fathers, Jerusalem and thy People are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O God, hear the prayer of thy Seruant and his supplication; and cause thy face to shine upon thy Sanctuary which is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear and hear, open thine eyes and behold our desolations, and the City which is called by thy Name: For we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercy: O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do; defer not for thine own sake, O my God; for thy City and thy People are called by thy Name.

And thus also should We, upon this Solemn Occasion, cry mightily unto God, and with the greatest importunity deprecate those terrible Judgments which we so righteously have deserv'd, and to which the great and crying Sins of the whole Nation have so justly expos'd us: Humbly beseeching Him, not for our righteousness,

ness, but for his great mercy; for his own Names sake, and because we are his People and are called by his Name, and because his Holy Truth and Religion are profess'd amongst us; that He would be pleas'd to hear the prayers of his Servants and their supplications which they have made before him this Day, *for the Lord's sake.*

Fourthly, we should likewise, upon this Day, pour out our most earnest Supplications to Almighty God, for the preservation of their *Majesties* sacred Persons, and for the prosperity and establishment of their Government, and for the good success of their Arms and Forces by Sea and Land.

And more especially, since His *Majesty*, with so many Confederate Princes and States of *Europe*, is engaged in so necessary an undertaking for the Common good of *Christendom*, and for the mutual preservation and recovery of their respective Rights: We should earnestly implore the favour and assistance of Almighty God in so just and glorious a Cause, against the common Invader and oppressor of the Rights and Liberties of Mankind.

And

And that of his infinite Goodness He would be graciously pleased to take the Person of our *Soveraign Lord the King* into the particular care and protection of his Providence: That He would secure his precious Life from all secret Attempts, and from open Violence: That He would give his Angels Charge over him, and cover his head in the day of Battel, and crown it with victory over his Enemies, and restore Him to us again in safety.

And that He would likewise preserve and direct the *Queen's Majesty*, in whose hands the Administration of the Government is at present so happily plac'd: That He would give Her wisdom and resolution for such a Time as this, and support and carry Her through all the Difficulties of it.

And lastly, that He would bless them Both with a long Life, and a peaceful and happy Reign over us; that *under them we may live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.*

Fifthly, our Fasting and humiliation should be accompanied with our Alms and Charity to the poor and needy: And we should every one of us, according to the counsel given by
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Dan. 4.
27.

the Prophet to King Nebuchadnezzar, *break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthning of our tranquillity*; hereby intimating that if there be any way to prevent or remove the Judgments of God, and to prolong the tranquillity and happiness of Prince and People, a sincere Repentance, and a great Charity to them that are in necessity and distress, are most likely to prevail with God, not only to respite the ruine of a sinful People, but to incline Him to thoughts of peace towards them: For so he promiseth to the *Jews* upon their sincere Repentance, and earnest Supplication to Him, which are alwayes accompanied with

Jer. 29.
11,
12,
13.

Charity to the poore: *For I know the thoughts which I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an unexpected end: Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you: And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*

And I have often thought that the extraordinary Charity of this whole Nation, and of our pious Princes who are so ready to every good work and such bright and shining Examples in
this

this kind, more than once so seasonably extended to the relief of our distressed Brethren, who fled hither for refuge from the Rage and Cruelty of their Persecutors: I say, I have often thought, that this very thing, next to the infinite mercy and goodness of Almighty God, hath had a very particular influence upon our preservation and deliverance from those terrible Calamities which were just ready to rush in upon us. And what cause have we to thank God who hath allotted to us this more blessed and merciful part, to *give* and not to *receive*; to be free from persecution our selves, that so we might be in a capacity to give refuge and relief to them that were persecuted?

There are but few that have the faith to believe it, but certainly Charity to the poor is a great security to us in times of evil: So *David* assures us, speaking of the *righteous* or *Charitable* man, *He shall not, sayes he, be afraid in the evil time, and in the days of Dearth he shall be satisfy'd.*

And so likewise in Times of publick Distress, when we are beset with cruel and powerful Enemies, who if God were not on our side would swallow us up, the publick Charity of a Nation
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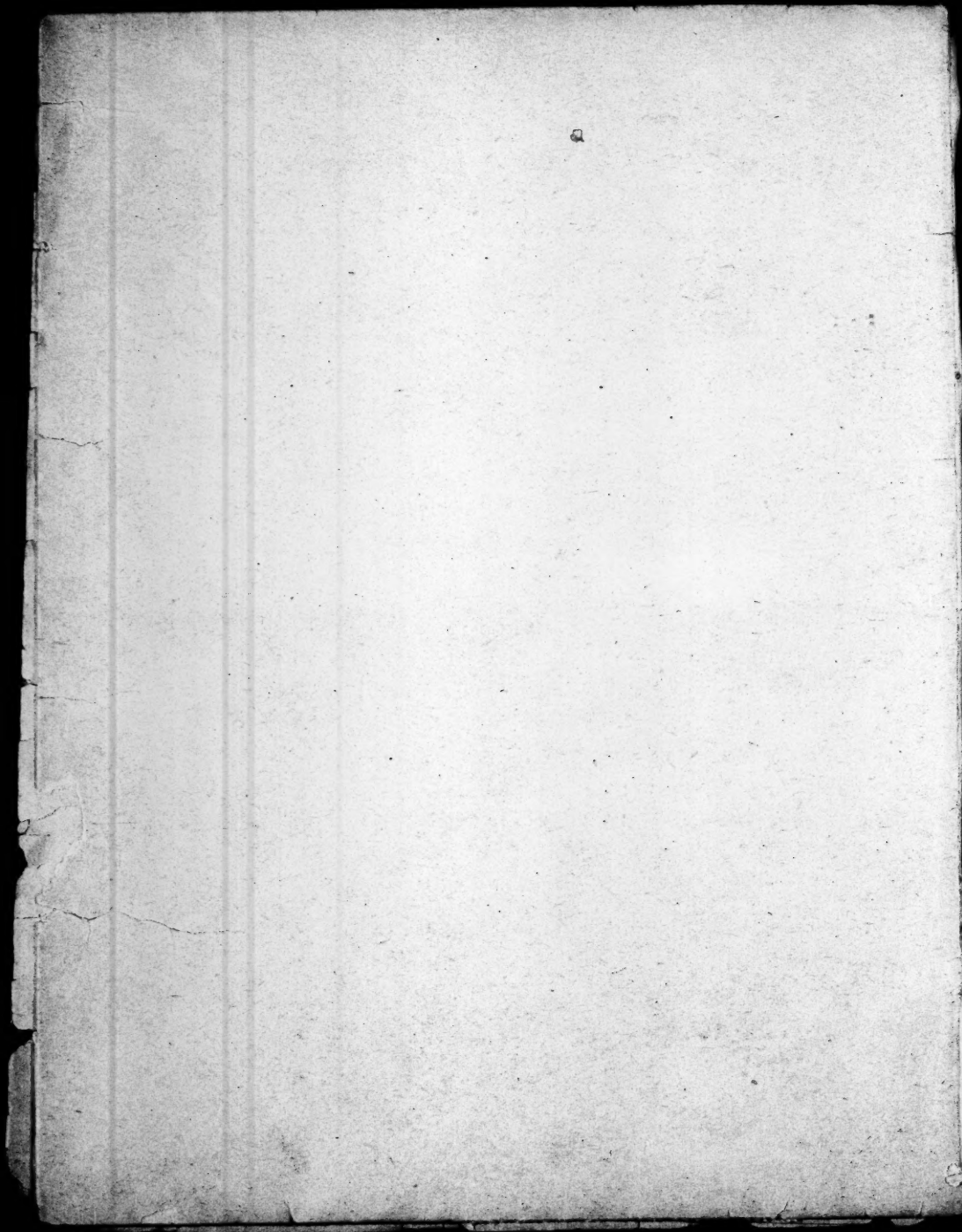
on hath many times prov'd its best safeguard and shield: *It shall fight for thee*, saith the Son of *Sirach*, speaking of the Charity of Almes, *against thine Enemy, more than a mighty shield and strong spear.*

And of this, as I said before, I doubt not but We of this Nation, by the great mercy and goodness of God to us, have had happy experience in our late wonderful Deliverance under the Conduct and Valour of one of the best and bravest of Princes; to whom by too many among us, the most unworthy and unthankful returns have been made for all the unwearied pains he hath undergone, and for the many desperate hazards to which he hath exposed himself for our sakes, that ever were made to so great and generous a Benefactor: To so great a Benefactor, I say, not onely to these Nations, but even to all *Europe*, in asserting and maintaining their Liberties against the insolent pride and unjust encroachments of one of the greatest Oppressors the World hath known for many Ages: Of whom it may be said as *Job* doth of the

Job 41.

33. 34.

Leviathan, upon the earth there is not his like: I am glad I cannot apply what immediately follows,



lows, that *he is made without fear*; but surely the next words are opposite enough, *he beholdeth all high things, and is King of all the children of pride*: And yet *He that is Higher than the highest, even He that sitteth in the Heavens doth laugh at him, for He seeth that his Day is coming*.

To conclude this *Particular*; if we would have our Prayers ascend up to Heaven and find acceptance there, our Almes must go along with them: So the *Angel* intimates when he says to *Cornelius*, *thy Prayers and thine Almes* *Act. 10.* *are gone up for a memorial before God*: Thy Prayers and thine Almes; they must go together if we desire that our Prayers should be effectual. And the Prophet *Isaiah*, speaking of the *Fast* which God hath chosen, and which is acceptable to Him, makes Charity and Almes a most essential part of it: *Is it not*, says he, *to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house*; *Isa. 58.* *when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy self from thine own flesh*; Then shalt thou call and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, *here I am*.

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Sixtly,

Sixthly and lastly, we should prosecute our Repentance and good resolutions to the actual Reformation and amendment of our Lives. For in *this* Repentance doth mainly consist: This is the proper fruit and effect of all our humiliation and good resolutions, to forsake our sins, and to become better for the future; more pious and devout towards God, more sober and chaste with regard to our selves, more just and charitable, more humble and meek towards all men: In a word, more innocent, more useful, and more *holy in all manner of conversation*.

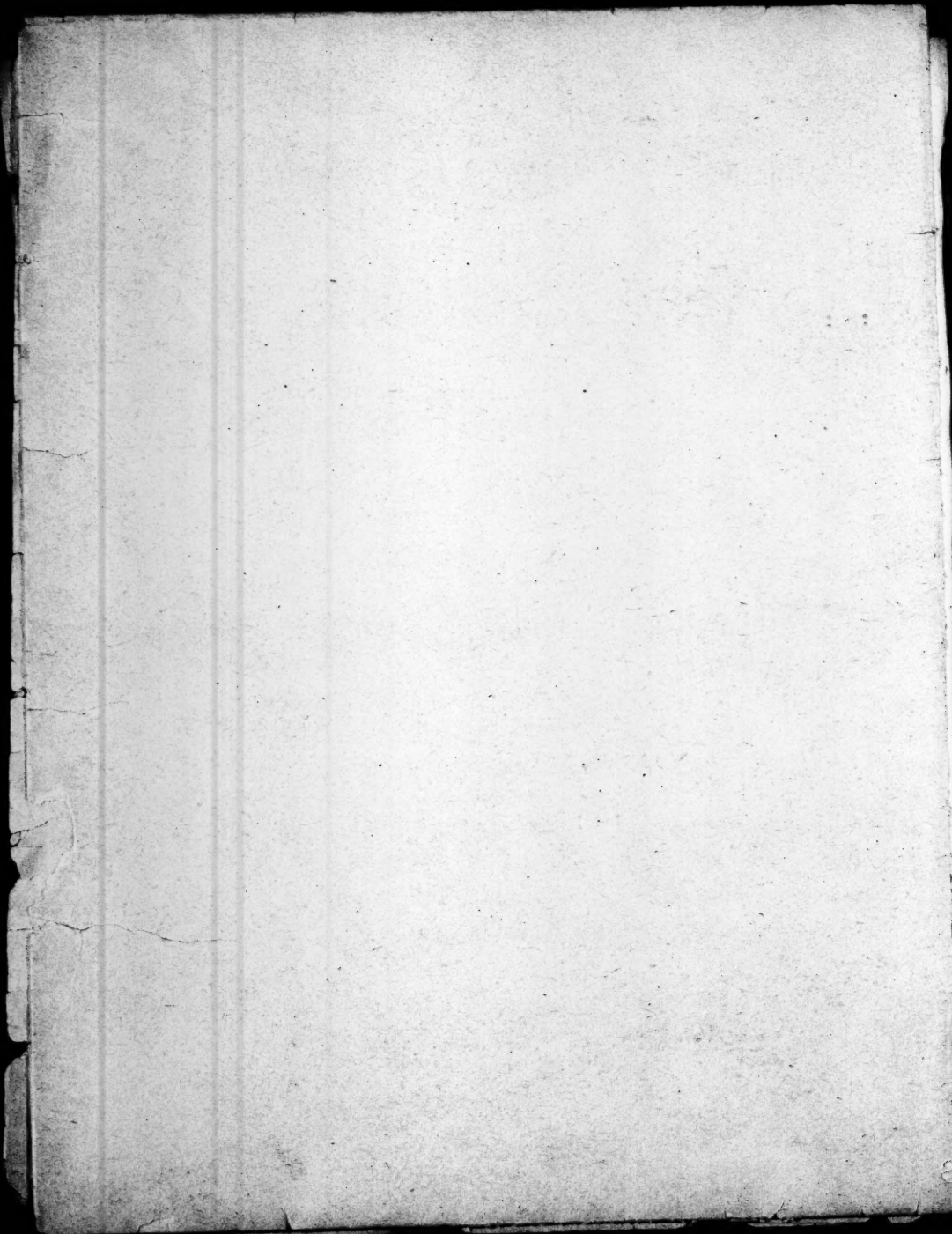
And without this, all our Fasting and humiliation, our most earnest Prayers and Supplications, will signifie nothing: All our sorrow and teares will be but as water spilt upon the ground, and will not turn to any account either to save our own Souls, or to preserve *this untoward generation, this crooked and perverse Nation*, from ruin and destruction.

2 Chron.

7. 14.

So God tells Solomon, that this is the onely way to appease and reconcile Him to a sinful People: *If my People which is called by my Name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways:*

Then



Then will I hear in Heaven, and forgive their sin,
and heal their Land.

And if this were the happy effect of our Prayers and Humiliation this Day, to turn us from *Zeck. 8.*
our wicked ways; God would then turn away ^{19.}
his anger from us; and, as he promised to the
Jews by the Prophet Zechary, He would turn
these our monthly Fasts into joy, and gladness,
and cheerful Feasts; as he hath in a great
measure already done, Blessed be his great and
glorious Name.

But if we will not hearken and obey, can
we expect that God should deliver us from the
hands of our Enemyes that we may sin against
Him without fear all the dayes of our Lives?
To what purpose should the Providence of
God take so much care to preserve our Reli-
gion to us, when we make no better use of
it for the direction and government of our
Lives? When it serves most of us, onely to
talk of it; and too many amongst us, to talk
against it, to deride it, and despitefully to use
it. If this be the truth of our Case, what can
we say, why the Kingdom of God should not
be taken from us and given to a Nation that
will bring forth the fruits of it? What can

we say, why our Candlestick should not be remov'd, and the light of the glorious Gospel of *Christ* which we have so long enjoyed, and so long rebelled against, should not be utterly extinguish'd amongst us?

And if I cannot prevail with you to come to these good Resolutions, and to make them good: If you will not be perswaded to praise, yet be pleas'd to attend to what we say: Hear our words at least, if ye will not do them. This the People of the *Jews* would do, when they were at the worst: So God tells the Prophet concerning them: *They come unto thee, as the People cometh; and they sit before thee, as my People; and they hear thy words, but they will not do them.*

*Ezek. 33.
31.*

I had much rather at any time have occasion to praise than to reprove, especially in this great Assembly: And yet it is not to be dissembled, that the behaviour of too many in this Place is frequently so careless and irreverent, as is very misbecoming those who are in the more peculiar Presence of the great and glorious Majesty of *Heaven and Earth*, and profess at that very time to worship Him.

I am sure, we have a better Pattern perpetually

tually before us; of a decent and unaffected devotion, of a most serious and steady attention, without wandering, without diversion, and without drowsiness: such an Example as I cannot but hope will in a short time gain upon us all, and by a more gentle and silent reproof win us to the imitation of it.

And if we could but be prevail'd upon to demean our selves with that Reverence, and to hear with that Attention, which becomes the Worship and the Word of God, it might then be hop'd that we would consider what is said; and consideration would probably work conviction, and conviction bring us to a better mind, and to a firm purpose of doing what we are inwardly convinc'd it is both our duty and our interest to do.

Let us then go away from this Solemnity, with a resolution to do every one what we ought; truly and earnestly to repent us of our sins past, and to lead a new life for the future; to fear that *great and terrible God* in whose presence we have humbled our selves this Day; and to *turn to Him that hath smitten us*, lest we provoke him to *punish us yet seven times more*, and after that *seven times more for our sins*, and
for

for our impenitency in them, till at last He make our plagues wonderfull.

To conclude ; let us every one, with that true Penitent in *Job*, take words to our selves and say, surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more ; that which I see not teach thou me, and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more. Oh ! that were such a heart in us, that it might be well with us, and with our children for ever.

Which God of his infinite Goodness grant, for his merities sake in *Jesus Christ* : To whom with thee O Father and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, both now and ever, Amen.

R. I. N. I. S. A.

